

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE E-21WASHINGTON POST  
20 August 1983*File Only***JACK ANDERSON****Maybe China  
Can't Use U.S.  
High-Tech Items**

President Reagan has made it easier for the Peoples Republic of China to buy U.S. high-technology items for probable military use, justifying the expected sales with the hope that the Chinese won't buy much, or won't be able to use what they buy.

This hope is echoed in a secret Pentagon estimate that disparages "the Chinese ability to absorb and maintain U.S. equipment."

The report explains why: "One of the lessons we learned from Vietnam was that U.S. know-how—often in the form of U.S. advisers or technicians—must accompany U.S. technology if advanced systems are to be used and maintained properly. Although the Chinese are technologically advanced compared to the Vietnamese, they are well behind the state-of-the-art in most areas, and their common soldier is still technologically unsophisticated.

"Thus, the Chinese might not be capable of effectively integrating our more advanced systems into their force structure. Even less sophisticated equipment would rapidly deteriorate if proper maintenance were

not understood and performed. Given the Chinese aversion to foreign technicians . . . this factor could be critical."

This may seem like too much reliance on an ethnic stereotype, but the fact remains that China is far behind the United States in technology. This is reflected in the relatively primitive state of its enormous military machine. A top-secret Pentagon report seen by my associate Dale Van Atta details these weaknesses:

- Though China has the world's largest army (163 divisions), most of its equipment is 1950s vintage, consisting of copies or variants of Soviet military hardware.

- Numerically, the Chinese navy is the world's second largest. But the great bulk of its fleet is made up of more than 1,000 small, high-speed patrol craft. There are no aircraft carriers, and no ships bigger than a destroyer. In fact, the Chinese have only 39 ships that fall in the "principal surface combatant" category.

- The Chinese have no anti-submarine aircraft, only one missile-carrying sub and 106 other attack subs. Few are long-range, and none is nuclear-powered.

- The Chinese air force is the world's third largest, with 4,200 fighter planes and 650 bombers. But again, the aircraft are technological Model Ts. The planes can't fight at night or in foul weather, and are

generally no match for Soviet aircraft.

- The Chinese have about 50 medium-range ballistic missiles, 90 intermediate-range missiles and fewer than a dozen intercontinental missiles—a pathetically small force considering the Soviet nuclear missiles arrayed against them.

- Chinese bombers have dropped nuclear devices in tests, but the planes that are designated for a nuclear role have no electronic countermeasures against air-defense weapons and are therefore extremely vulnerable. "These constraints place formidable limitations upon the use of bombers against well-defended targets, such as those within the U.S.S.R.," the report observes.

- China's defense against incoming missiles or bombers, on the other hand, is hopelessly inadequate. Its early-warning system facing the Soviets is riddled with holes. The Chinese have about 1,000 surface-to-air missile batteries and anti-aircraft guns, but their crews might not even see Soviet planes before it is too late.